

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 25 are now pending in the application. Claims 1, 8, 15, and 19 have been amended, and Claim 25 has been added herein. The amendments to the claims contained herein are of equivalent scope as originally filed and, thus, are not narrowing amendments. No new matter has been added. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection(s) in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC §102

Claims 1 through 5, 7, 8, 10 through 17 and 19 through 24 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Arai (3,036,864). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, Applicant notes that Claims 1, 8, 15, and 19 have all been amended to more particularly claim embodiments of the present invention. Arai discloses a fixing device for a chair wherein the back and side arm members (1, 2) are provided with a pair of spaced plates (5, 6) that provide a parallel walled chamber (7) within the members. The corresponding attachment elements (15) are inserted *inside* the back and side arm members (1, 2), which are mechanically fastened to the base (3). The present invention provides auxiliary members (14, 20, and 22) that are not provided with apertures, and are merely supported on a first surface by the base member (12) and on a second surface by support bracket(s) (16, 18) that are *external* to the furnishing apparatus. Claims 1, 8, 15, and 19 have been amended to more particularly recite that the support bracket(s) provide the sole means of lateral support for the

auxiliary members and that no mechanical fasteners are used to secure the auxiliary members to the base.

Still further, it does not appear that either the side and back support members, or the side and back attachment elements, as referenced in Figures 1-4 of Arai, are interchangeable as recited in Claims 13 and 14 of the pending application.

Claims 1 through 8 and 10 through 24 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Richardson (2,815,067). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Similarly, Applicant notes that Claims 1, 8, 15, and 19 have all been amended to more particularly claim embodiments of the present invention. Richardson discloses a convertible chair unit having an integral base unit/chair pad (20) with removable support elements (40). The base portion (25) comprises at least one base plate that is spot welded to the support member (20), thereby making it impossible to separate or use the chair pad portion interchangeably as side arm or back portions. *See* col. 2, lines 30-36. The present invention provides a separate base unit (12) distinct from the auxiliary members (12, 20, 22). Additionally, the support elements of Richardson do not provide the sole lateral support to the auxiliary members; rather, the welded base plates (26, 28) prevent movement altogether. Further, unlike the design of the present invention having quick-release locking mechanisms, the base portion (25) of Richardson must be fully dismantled in order to attach or remove the support elements (40).

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the amended claims are not anticipated by the Asai or Richardson patents and requests reconsideration and allowance of the claims.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC §103

Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over either Richardson (2,815,067) or Arai (3,036,864). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

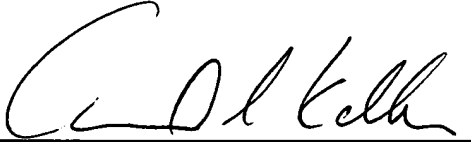
It is believed that independent Claim 1, from which Claim 9 depends, has been amended to overcome any anticipation and obviousness from the prior art. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of Claim 9 are respectfully sought.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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